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Book Review: Deploying Orientalism in Culture and History: From Germany to Central and Eastern Europe. Edited by James Hodkinson and John Walker

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Deploying Orientalism in Culture and History: From Germany to Central and Eastern Europe. Edited by James Hodkinson and John Walker with Shaswati Mazumdar and Johannes Feichtinger. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2013. Pp. viii + 259. Cloth \$90.00. ISBN 978-1571135759.

This well-edited volume is the first publication of the International Occident-Orient Research Network, established in 2008 by Anil Bhatti and James Hodkinson. The book contributes in significant ways to diversifying the orientalist discourses by covering German, Austrian, and, for the first time, Eastern European orientalisms. Edward Said's authoritative study of colonial orientalism is used critically as a reference point. On the one hand, Germanophone, Hungarian, Czech, and Russian orientalisms since the 1750s often reinforce Said's Foucauldian analysis, which criticizes the complicity of oriental studies in supplying useful "knowledge" to legitimize colonial "power." On the other hand, the contributors present a variety of orientalisms that enrich and complicate previous debates around orientalism. The chapters no longer take British orientalism as the "standard orientalism" (192), rather as just one variation. Similar to Andrea Polaschegg's *Der andere Orientalismus* (2005), this book attempts to develop a pluralistic "post-Saidian concept of orientalism" (192).

Germanophone orientalist discourses provide the focus of eight of the twelve chapters. The introduction by James Hodkinson and John Walker gives an excellent overview of existing scholarship on German orientalism by Susanna Zantop, Russell Berman, Nina Berman, Todd Kontje, Andrea Polaschegg, Suzanne Marchand, and Sarah Colvin. The chapters complement and expand upon these studies and also to some degree support Said's claim of German orientalism's "philological orientation" (193). John Walker examines Wilhelm von Humboldt's comparative study of language and his influence on Jürgen Habermas's idea of translation as the key to intercultural communication. The suggestion of cultural interdependency challenges Said's paradigm of orientalism as invested in a dichotomy between the European and the non-European, the civilized and the barbaric. Michael Dusche focuses on Friedrich Schlegel's romantic and nationalist engagement with Sanskrit and his "internal orientalism" that reimagines Germany as the "true" oriental self of Europe. This "positive" or "reverse" orientalism (42) differs from traditional orientalism with its negative connotations of the East as passive, mysterious, degenerate, exotic, and barbaric. Schlegel's real intention, however, lies in praising Germanic supremacy over the French. Using a similar methodology as in his book *German Orientalisms* (2004), Todd Kontje critically deals with Germany's "local orientalism" by considering the history of the Teutonic Knights and Germany's Jews, and by interpreting the use of orientalist motifs in Fatih Akin, Kafka, Thomas Mann, and Goethe. This intra-European orientalism undermines fixed boundaries of the Occident and Orient.

The works discussed in *Deploying Orientalism in Culture and History* often inevitably resort to orientalist stereotypes and Eurocentric rhetoric, yet the contributors point out an ambivalence that characterizes many of the writings. James Hodgkinson uses Germanophone travelogues on the Maghreb from the 1840s by an Alsatian pastor and an Austrian military conscript in the French army as examples to show how these writers both resisted and perpetuated orientalist tropes. Their dependence on as well as resentment toward the French colonial government determined their ambiguous roles in the colony and their perception of Muslim Algerians. Shaswati Mazumdar examines the portrayals of three representative oriental figures—the Jew, the Turk, and the Indian—by primarily looking at German-language press reactions to three historical events: the antisemitic Damascus Affair in 1840, the Crimean War between Russians and the Ottoman Empire (1853–1856), and the anticolonial Revolt of 1857 in India. The press gave space to competing voices about the Orient and orientals, clearly demonstrating conflicting interests among imperial powers and within their respective societies.

Chapters six and seven again portray a more positive orientalism. Jon Keune brings to awareness an eighteenth-century “disenchanted” (*entzaubert*) orientalism that Matthias Christian Sprengel’s political, historiographical, and empirical writings on India embody. This chapter strongly attests to the limitations of Said’s orientalist theory by presenting “an alternative form of orientalism” (118) to the nineteenth century’s more ideological, utilitarian, and imaginary approach. Similar to Sprengel, Willy Haas’s Indian exile narratives, as discussed by Jyoti Sabharwal, transcend orientalist jargon due to Haas’s personal experience. A Prague-born Germanophone of Jewish origin, who fled Nazi persecution to British-occupied India, Haas showed allegiance both to Gandhi’s anti-British struggle for independence and to the colonial British government for its role in opposing fascism. Duality is also evinced in his work as a scriptwriter for the Bombay cinema: He created a hybrid aesthetic that synthesizes the Weimar tradition with the visual codes of Indian cinema, with which he had recently become acquainted.

The Austro-Hungarian Empire, as examined by Johann Heiss and Johannes Feichtinger, adds two more variants of orientalism: the “distant” Orient (referring to the Ottoman Empire and the Turks) and the Orient that is “close to home” (referring to Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Southern Slavic peoples). The binary oppositions resemble Said’s concepts of an “imperial divide” and “shared experiences.” The ambiguous Habsburg form of orientalism that sees the Orient “as both a threat and as an opportunity” (159) is deployed by the Habsburg authorities to legitimize the monarchy’s self-proclaimed civilizing mission.

Chapters nine to eleven move eastward to Hungarian, Russian, and Czech orientalisms. The geographical proximity of these regions to the traditional Orient determines the perception of Eastern European identity as “*both oriental and Western*” (166). The

chapters repeatedly evoke a sense of hybrid, “non-Western,” and “semi-European” in-betweenness of Eastern Europe (210). Margit Köves explores the evolving role the Orient plays in the vicissitudes of Hungarian history over the last two hundred years. Kerstin S. Jobst discovers authors in the Russian Empire who, prior to Said, already tackled Russian orientalism in a Saidian manner and whose work pointed beyond Said. Jobst traces reasons for Said’s false claim of a relative absence of orientalist thinking in the Russian Empire to his biography and political convictions. Sarah Lemmen proposes a different Czech orientalism that is “noncolonial” because the Czech tourists in Africa and Asia distanced themselves from colonial European societies around 1918. Although they orientalized their destinations and underscored their own European identities, their travelogues demonstrate a “third way in an otherwise dichotomous world” (220). Ulrike Stamm’s discussion of functions that the stereotypically sensual Orient had for French and Germanophone traveler-cum-writers, male or female, concludes the book. Differences aside, the depiction of oriental sexuality is clichéd and favors European sexual norms.

The distillation of various orientalisms here is intended to distinguish this book from others. It is a rewarding reading experience for anyone interested in orientalism, postcolonial studies, travel writing, Central and Eastern European Studies, Indology, and Asian German Studies.

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Gotthold Ephraim Lessing: His Life, Works, and Thought. By H. B. Nisbet. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. 734. Cloth £85.00. ISBN 978-0199679478.

H.B. Nisbet’s monumental biography of G.E. Lessing—one of the most influential figures of the German and indeed of the European Enlightenment—has finally appeared in print for English-speaking audiences. This impressive monograph first became available in 2008 as a German translation by Karl S. Guthke. As the culmination of a lifetime of erudition, the book found immediate acclaim, winning the University of Münster’s Hamann Research Prize and the Einhard Prize for Biography. Nisbet has filled a long-standing gap in research with respect to a comprehensive study of Lessing’s life and work, and the sheer scale, breadth, and depth of his study are unparalleled in the entire pantheon of Lessing scholarship. The original manuscript has been reworked to reflect even the most recent developments in Lessing scholarship, which includes numerous references to the third edition of Monika Fick’s excellent *Lessing-Handbuch* (2010) throughout.

Nisbet’s prosopography (his prolixity consistently sends even the most learned reader happily scurrying to their *OED*) begins by connecting Lessing’s familial situation with his earliest poetic and dramatic efforts, where both the author and his works